

Jadwiga Andrzejewska. A portrait of the theatre and film actress

In 1817, William Hazlitt, an eminent English essayist and writer, noted that “it has been considered as the misfortune of first-rate talents for the stage, that they leave no record behind them except that of vague rumour, and that the genius of a great actor perishes with him, «leaving the world no copy».”

Numerous monographs have been devoted to the most outstanding actors in history; however, Hazlitt’s take on the matter, despite the passage of almost two hundred years, is still valid.

This dissertation, dedicated to the artistic biography of Jadwiga Andrzejewska (1915-1977) - a theatre, film and cabaret actress - is an attempt to capture the essence of her acting based on a wide-ranging press query, archival materials, films and other sources.

The work consists of four large chapters, in which various stages of Andrzejewska’s life and her acting career are presented in chronological order.

The first chapter focuses on Jadwiga Andrzejewska’s early life in Łódź. Being, as she was, the daughter of Polish Theatre workers, she had had her first stage performances early in her life. She quickly became familiar with the stage and soon partnered with some of the most outstanding Polish actors of the era, such as Irena Solska, Józef Węgrzyn, Stefan Jaracz and many more.

Young Andrzejewska gave a staggering performance in M. Maeterlinck’s *The Blue Bird* (1926, dir. K. Tatarkiewicz). Irena Grywińska, who played a supporting role, remembered her so well that later, in 1932, she drew Karol Adwentowicz’s attention to the young, promising actress. Adwentowicz, the founder of the Chamber Theater in Warsaw, was looking for a lead actress for his production of *Girls in Uniform* by Ch. Winslow.

Chapter 2 describes Andrzejewska’s so-called Warsaw period. A mere 17-year-old, poorly educated (she completed only 7 classes of elementary school), Andrzejewska starred in *Girls in Uniform* earning her the praise of the top critics, e.g., Żeleński, Słonimski and Irzykowski. Her fast-growing career was Cinderella-like. The actress played several lead roles, in *Girls’ Dormitory* by L. Fodor (1936, dir. I. Grywińska), *Miss Maliczewska* (1937, dir. Z. Modrzewska), and G. Zapolska’s *Froggie* (1938, dir. K. Adwentowicz) - to name a few.

She also played in several films which brought her enormous popularity, among them some with importance for Polish cinema such as *Crossed Paths* (1933, dir. J. Gardan), *Girls of Nowolipki* (1937, dir. J. Lejtes), *Fears* (1938, dir. E. Cękański and K. Szolowski).

Andrzejewska not only played young women experiencing dramatic personal dilemmas; thanks to her *vis comica*, she also created a splendid comedic characters, which she then embellished in her cabaret performances. It seems almost coincidental that the theatre plays, films and audio plays she performed in addressed important women's issues (women's rights, the responsibility for the pregnancy, single motherhood, etc.).

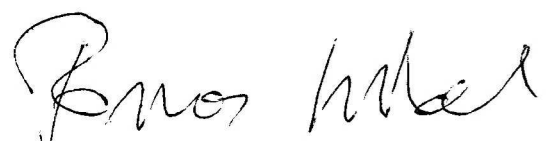
The years 1939-1947 Andrzejewska spent moving from place to place, as discussed in chapter 3. At the beginning of World War II, she performed at the Miniature Theatre in Lviv. After the agreement establishing the Polish Army in the Soviet Union had been signed, she took part in a propaganda film, *War Film Album No. 9* (1942, dir. of the Polish part I. Sawczenko). Later, with the whole Miniature Theatre team, she joined Anders' Army. She left the Soviet Union and traveled through Iran, Iraq, Palestine, Italy, and finally arrived in the United Kingdom. She played in the Dramatic Theatre of the Polish Second Corps, e.g., in *Much Ado about Nothing* (1946, dir. W. Radulski). In Italy, she appeared in *The Great Road* (1946, dir. M. Waszyński), a film which was soon nationally recognized as anti-Polish.

Andrzejewska spent the post-war years in her hometown of Łódź – chapter 4. Initially perceived by the authorities as politically uncertain, she was assigned to entertainment theatre. With time, however, she managed to return to dramatic theatre (Powszechny Theatre, the Theatre of S. Jaracz), becoming the most popular actress in Łódź. She played her most outstanding roles in M. Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska's *A Woman of Wonder* (1968, dir. M. Szonert) and B. Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1973, dir. J. Hoffman). Yet, she would never receive a film role that would match her outstanding acting skills and pre-war achievements.

The final part of the dissertation is an attempt to capture and analyze the phenomenon of Andrzejewska, who, having no prior professional preparation for acting, managed to achieve a significant place in the theatre and in the pre-war cinema. In 1932, during her very first interview, Wiktor Brumer wanted to know about her "approach when working on a role". Andrzejewska quickly replied: "I ignored the details. They all came out as a whole."

In other words, she prepared her roles largely guided by intuition. She would capture the essence of the character; the behavior, gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice etc. followed naturally. Her intuition was supported by talent, hard work and years of experience.

The dissertation is supplemented by several photographs, a full character list, and a bibliography.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ewa Hiler". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letter 'E' being particularly large and stylized.